

Globalization, Women, and Health in the Twenty-First Century

Edited by

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and
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GLOBALIZATION, WOMEN, AND HEALTH IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

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To our mothers

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Foreword

Globalization exerts positive and negative impacts on health and has been linked to reduced government expenditures on health, education, and social programs, and restructured workplace and home life. Globalization is altering gender roles and relationships and influencing health determinants. Asymmetric rights and responsibilities, labor market segregation, consumption patterns, and discrimination are influenced differently by globalization and affect men and women's health in distinct ways. Gender dimensions of global public-private partnerships, trade agreements, economic, political, social, and health system reform, and labor trends were illuminated in international consultations conducted by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research Institute of Gender and Health in 2003 and 2004. Many of these critical issues are captured in this book.

This timely and transformative text portrays diverse perspectives, including ethical, economic, political, and social movement influences to illuminate the complex interrelationships at the intersection of gender, globalization, and health. This foreword draws attention to another crucial context in this debate: the United Nation's 2000 Millennium Declaration resolved to promote gender equality and empower women as strategies to combat poverty, hunger, and disease and stimulate sustainable development. Many millennium goals closely align with the issues raised in this book.

The initial Millennium goal "eradicate extreme *poverty*" has clear gender implications. Studies in the United States of America and Europe reveal differential mortality rates derived from social-economic disadvantage and gender roles. Moreover, female gender and low socioeconomic status were associated with limited access to health services and poor health status.

The Millennium Goal 3 "promote *gender equality* and empower women" refers to gender disparities in education, literacy, employment, and political involvement. The WHO (2002) defines gender equity in health as "the elimination of unnecessary, unjust, and avoidable differences between men and women" in their potential for good health, illness, disability, or death from preventable causes. Health disparities "or marked

inequality between . . . population groups” is defined on the basis of gender, race, or ethnicity, educational level, literacy, or socioeconomic status.

Health conditions linked to *reproductive and sexual health* account for approximately 25 percent of the global disease burden faced by women. Reproductive health was identified as a major priority in our regional consultations. Relevant issues such as new reproductive technologies, access to contraception, and maternal mortality issues are articulated throughout this book. Although issues of men’s health and the role of masculinity are not as prominent, unique voices and research studies focused on men are included here as well.

In addition, prominent attention is given to Millennium Declaration Goal 6 to “combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other infectious diseases” as well as the spread of the tobacco epidemic around the globe.

The editors and authors of this book deserve commendation for this major contribution to the literature. Their insights highlight the importance of research to elucidate the conceptual and empirical underpinnings of the intersection of globalization, gender, and health and to design and test relevant interventions. These complex and critical investigations should engage scholars from the North and South working in partnership.

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We are very appreciative of the work our authors put into this book. These men and women lead truly international lives, and their perspectives, expertise, and experiences make this book the invaluable resource we believe it is. Despite language differences and the wide distances that separated the editors from the contributors, we were able to assemble a dynamic and truly global approach to the pressing issues at hand. We greatly appreciated their patience and ongoing involvement as the book took shape.

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